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ABSTRACT

A new element added to the University of California at Los Angeles' student teacher program provided an opportunity for an exploratory study of the roles and responsibilities of college supervisors from an organizational perspective. A case study approach used data from interviews, self reports (in the form of a journal) from supervisors, and notes from a participant-observer during a two-week period. Doctoral and masters' degree students were hired as "clinical consultants" and were assigned to work with approximately 16 student teachers for one year. The clinical consultants were to act as counselors or as "clinical teachers," but they had no evaluative responsibilities. It was hoped that the clinical consultants could provide frequent feedback without the threat of evaluation for the student teachers and that the clinical consultants could receive training and practice in supervisory and research skills. Examination of data indicated that clinical consultants felt that credibility with student teachers and school-based cooperating teachers was critical. Credibility was enhanced by the lack of formal evaluative authority and the amount of field-based experience possessed by the consultants, as well as their use of three-way conferences. However, clinical consultants expressed disappointment with the conception of the research element of the program. Weak links were seen in the program's communication system between clinical consultants and college professors and between clinical consultants and program administrators. The usefulness of data provided by an organizational perspective in this case can indicate an alternative approach to supervisory programs. (FG)

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An Analysis of a College Supervisory Position in Teacher
Education from an Organizational Perspective
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ABSTRACT

This research focused on building an operational framework using role theory concepts to analyze qualitative data gathered on college supervisory positions in a teacher training institution. This framework was used to analyze the experimental Clinical Consultant program in the Teacher Education Laboratory at UCLA.

Data was obtained from journals, interviews, and participation-observation notes.

Discussion includes impact of removing evaluative power from supervisor responsibilities and the communication gap existing between the administration and Consultants. Bases for field credibility of such university-affiliated teacher training personnel is described.

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Statement of the Problem

A persistent problem in the field of teacher education is the lack of interface between the people who conduct research and practitioners in the field. One of the people who experiences this gap most keenly is the college supervisor of student teachers. The person occupying this position is caught between two worlds--that of the university or college, and that of the public school. The college supervisor is in a very critical position, functioning as the only link between the training institution and the public school. The student teacher takes courses at the university and then enters into practice teaching. The practice teaching episode is a powerful experience, often encouraging the student teacher to reject the theories of the university in favor of the realities of the public school setting.

It is assumed that the university wants to have an impact on the pre-service teacher or it would not be in the teacher education business. However, once the student teachers are out in the field, they have minimal contact with the college other than through the college supervisor.

The college supervisor is given a variety of responsibilities to perform. The most common complaint among the supervisors is that they cannot play all the assigned roles adequately. Often, responsibilities at the university combined with a large

caseload of students makes it impossible for them to observe the student teacher's classroom performance adequately. Further, the college supervisor is often expected to be both counselor and evaluator of the pre-service teacher. How to do this is yet another dilemma.

Variations on the traditional college supervisor position have been tried, such as the "clinical professor" notion and the public school teacher as supervisor. Yet the problems of the supervisory position remain. Always there appear to be conflicting role responsibilities such that the supervision is not adequate or particularly useful.

The present research examined a college supervisor position from an organizational perspective, taking into account the array of variables which can help explain how and why the position functions as it does. This is a distinctive approach because it presents a sharp contrast to the current literature on this topic. Such research has tended to offer recommendations based on personal preference, surveys, or interaction analyses concentrating solely on the student teacher-supervisor interaction.

As Katz and Kahn argue, there has been a "psychological fallacy of concentrating upon individuals without regard to the role relationships that constitute the social system of which they are a part."

In summary, much of the literature discusses how people perceive the college supervisor position; what they would like

a college supervisor to do; and suggests alternatives such as the clinical professor or school-based supervision. What the literature on pre-service teacher supervision does not address is the question of whether or not the particular role specifications and/or place of the college supervisor position within the university organizational structure and processes sets up the college supervisor for failure.

Description of the organizational setting and position

The Clinical Consultant position at UCLA is part of an experimental program which has been in operation from the Fall, 1979 to the present. This particular program was chosen for analysis because it represents a significantly different and intriguing format for the college supervisor position, one that challenges some basic organizational assumptions underlying most college or university pre-service supervision.

The teacher training done by the Graduate School of Education at UCLA is contained within what is known as the Teacher Education Laboratory (TEL). The purpose of the TEL is to provide training which will enable a student, within one year's time, to be eligible for a California State Teaching Credential at the elementary and/or secondary level.

The teacher training program is made up of five teams. Each team is led by a professor from the School of Education. This team approach has been in existence since 1972. The intent behind structuring the program into teams is to allow various

professors, acting as team leaders, to explore the use of different philosophical approaches to the training of pre-service teachers. For example, at one time there was a team that attempted to apply humanistic theoretical assumptions and another that used a theoretical base drawn from behaviorism. In recent years the philosophical lines between teams have become less clearly discernable.

Up until the year under study, (academic year 1980-1981), the organizational structure of the TEL could be described in the following manner. The TEL Director oversees the entire TEL operations and is himself a professor in the department. The TEL Administrator works with the Director, administering the training program as well as functioning as a leader of one of the teams and head of the Clinical Consultant program. Also involved in the training program are the TEL coordinators, the clinical instructors, and several School of Education faculty who take responsibility for particular teams. The other people, critical to the training program, but functioning outside the TEL organization, are the supervising teachers who accept students into the classroom for training purposes.

During the first quarter the students received instruction in social and psychological foundations of education from the team professors, as well as methods instruction from the clinical instructors, who were fulltime public school teachers hired by the university.

After the first quarter coursework was completed, including observation-participation work in a field setting, the students began the two quarters of student teaching assignments. Their connection with the team professors was discontinued. Instead, seven university coordinators, hired jointly by the cooperating school district and UCLA, were responsible for all aspects of the student teaching assignments, which included locating suitable supervising teachers, inservicing these supervising teachers about their responsibilities toward the student teachers, making student teacher assignments, visiting the student teachers once or twice per quarter to provide them with feedback related to their classroom performance, evaluating, in conjunction with the supervising teachers, the performance of each student, and providing one or two workshops for the students related to the use of various instructional materials. The ratio of student to coordinator was approximately 1- 30 .

During student teaching, the students continued to take methods courses offered by the Clinical Instructors. These instructors were not involved in any field supervision.

Consequently, during student teaching, the only supervision done by the university was done by the coordinators. Given the nature and extent of their responsibilities, the amount of consistent and in-depth feedback and analysis that they could give to the students was logistically extremely limited.

In August, 1979, for budgetary reasons, the district decided to withdraw its funding of the coordinator positions. As a result, UCLA was forced to reduce the number of positions from seven to 2½. With such a drastic reduction in the available number of university supervisors, it was evident that the coordinators could no longer be expected to retain all of their previously designated responsibilities.

Necessity became the parent of invention. While the rest of the organizational structure of the training program remained intact, it was decided that the coordinators' responsibilities would be divided between two separate positions. The coordinators retained the administrative duties of supervision, making school assignments for the student teachers, finding and training supervising teachers, and participating in the student teacher evaluations.

The actual supervision of the student teachers in the field, however, was to be done by ten people occupying a new 1/2 time job position in the Teacher Education Laboratory, entitled Assistant Coordinator (later renamed Clinical Consultant in Teacher Education). The Clinical Consultants (CC) were given the responsibility of working with a group of approximately sixteen students (lowered the second year to twelve students) during the three quarters of the training program.

The following is a description, in theory, of the Clinical Consultant program. 10 doctoral students are hired to fill the Clinical Consultant positions. During Fall quarter, the Clinical

Consultants act as teaching assistants assigned by joint agreement of the TEL and the participating professors to a particular team (of which there are five teams in all). They attend many of the university class sessions for the student teachers. Some conduct weekly discussion hours with the students. In addition, the Consultants observe with the student teachers during the observation/participation experience, helping the students learn how to recognize theory discussed during class sessions at UCLA as it is demonstrated in the actual classroom setting. At this time, the goal is for the student teachers and their consultants to get to know one another, as well as to provide the consultants with the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the structure and staff of the schools they will be visiting.

Winter and spring quarters, during the field experience, the consultants are expected to observe each of their student teachers on at least a bi-monthly basis. The classroom observation is expected to last approximately an hour and all observations are to be followed by a conference. Where possible and appropriate the conferences include the student teacher, the supervising teacher, and the consultant, hopefully at the school site. At other times the conferences are conducted with only the student teacher and the consultant.

During the Fall quarter, the consultants meet once each week for a 2-1/2 hour meeting with the TEL administrator. At this time, with the use of videotapes and role playing situations, the consultants receive training in feedback and analysis

skills for use in lesson observations and post-observation conferences. In addition, these meetings are intended to encourage team building within the Clinical Consultant group and problem-solving related to the Clinical Consultant program.

The consultant is seen by the TEL as a kind of counselor or "clinical teacher". They are intentionally left out of the formal evaluation processes with the hope that student teachers will feel more comfortable talking to them about their professional concerns.

With the creation of these new positions, it was hoped that the following would occur: first, the TEL could provide students with more frequent feedback on their teaching skills within the set budgetary restrictions; second, the student teachers would be provided this feedback and analysis without the usual threat of evaluation; third, the graduate students employed would have the opportunity to receive training and practice in the acquisition of supervisory skills; fourth, the graduate students would have the opportunity to engage in research in the area of teacher education with the support and resources of the TEL readily available. Further, the link between theory at the university and practice in the classroom would be strengthened. Finally, (and somewhat tangentially) it was hoped that perhaps the consultants might indirectly provide a role model for the supervising teachers in doing lesson feedback and analysis.

Methodology

A case study approach using qualitative methodology techniques was used for the purposes of this research project. The research participants included nine fulltime and one half-time clinical consultant as well as the two members of the TEL administration. Nine of the consultants were concurrently in the doctoral program at the university and one of the consultants was in the Master's degree program. This researcher was in the position of participant-observer during the study.

Data providing information for this research were obtained by the use of the following: personal journals kept by each consultant and the researcher, interviews conducted with all consultants and administrators involved in the study, written documents used by university teacher training program, tapes and notes obtained at consultant meetings, and informal notes and documents made available by various consultants.

Journals were kept by each consultant as well as the researcher for a period of two weeks. The journal format was relatively free form. The guidelines for content indicated by the researcher were that the consultants should attempt to describe in as much detail as possible all the activities they engaged in as part of their job, as well as any feelings they experienced associated with these activities. They were asked to make entries each day. The length of two weeks for the journal writing was decided upon because it coincided with the length of the consultant's visitation cycle.

The decision not to use any preconceived categories as part of the journal format was made to minimize the amount of researcher bias. Individual journals have been used previously as a source of data on job roles, particularly in the field of management (Carlson 1951, Stewart 1967). A weakness cited by Mintzberg (1973) related to their usage, focuses on the fact that they are organized according to a set of preconceived categories. As a result, there is no opportunity to look at the data inductively, formulating categories from what is gathered, rather than according to the preconceptions. The use of non-structured journals was an attempt to address this methodological difficulty. By not providing a journal form with preconceived role categories, the researcher was attempting to avoid forcing data about roles and feelings which, in reality might not be there.

Before the interviews were conducted, a general framework was developed using the literature on role theory. The reason for developing this framework was not to provide categories which the relevant data could then be fed in to, but rather to provide a general direction for the inquiry in progress. It was assumed that this framework would be modified, changed or refined as a result of information obtained from the various data sources.

The process for arriving at the initial framework was first to do a thorough review of the literature on role theory. The

literature was analyzed for definitions of such role theory concepts as role conflict, power and authority, as well as for general frameworks which had been developed to analyze roles within an organizational structure.

The interview questioning process was guided by two catalysts. The first was the tentative framework which served as a general guide for the research. From the framework a set of categories of needed information was developed which served to guide the questions asked. The journals kept by each consultant served as the other catalyst for information. Each journal was read over several times prior to the interview. Comments made in the journal and events described were noted in the interview schedule for the purpose of obtaining further elucidation by the consultants of their job perceptions.

The type of interview format used may be described as a non-scheduled standard interview (Richardson et al 1965). This format was chosen because it encouraged flexibility in terms of the kind of data which might be obtained within the general organizational framework being used.

It should be emphasized that the methodology used was not purely qualitative. The study evolved as a direct result of the researcher's participation in the Clinical Consultant Program. In attempting to deal with some of the problems of the position it gradually became apparent that something like the concepts available in role theory could prove helpful in trying to analyze and explain the dynamics of the position. This was a

departure from "pure" qualitative methodology in that the research was undertaken from a particular theoretical perspective at the start rather than trying to disavow previous knowledge.

Results and Discussion

This study demonstrated that, at least in the case under investigation, that the analysis of the college supervisor position using organizational variables was extremely helpful in clarifying some of the strengths and weaknesses associated with that position as well as in helping to generate recommendations for program improvement. As stated earlier, concern was centered around the interaction between the college supervisor and the student teacher, focusing on psychological variables which may impact their relationship. The extent of the influence which the college supervisor brings to that relationship reflects the extent of influence which the university has in the field.

This research demonstrated that the explanation and manipulation of that student teacher-supervisor interaction may be addressed by examining the organizational variables within which the college supervisor position is embedded.

The UCLA program attended to certain organizational variables in an effort to make the interaction process between the supervisor and the student teacher a more productive one. One basic change focused on a reallocation of certain responsibilities

within the TEL organizational structure; namely, the removal of formal evaluative power from the supervisor in the field. This was done in an effort to encourage a more open communication with the student teachers.

Another basic organizational change was the inclusion of a training component for the supervisors by the university. This innovation challenged a traditional assumption that if someone has done graduate studies in teacher education or if they have been a practicing teacher they necessarily have the skills to supervise student teachers in the field.

A third organizational change, again related to job activities to be performed, was the inclusion of research responsibilities in the Clinical Consultants position, again with the goal of strengthening the interface between theory and practice.

By adopting an organizational perspective to the study of this supervisory position, changes themselves could be examined. The following is a description and discussion of some of the findings.

First, the removal of formal evaluative authority from the college supervisor responsibilities was seen by the Clinical Consultants as impacting their relationship with their student teachers in a positive way. They perceived their influence vis-à-vis the student teachers as relying more on expert and referential power bases since the power to impact the student teachers by threat of punishment was not available to them.

The expert power base was available because the Clinical Consultants had all been teachers in the field themselves and were only (in most cases) recently removed from the public school setting. Thus, the recommendations they made tended to carry more credibility with the student teachers.

Further, because of their years of teaching experience, the Clinical Consultants had more credibility with the supervising teachers, unlike most university personnel who are usually viewed as being out of touch with the realities of schooling. The increased credibility of the Clinical Consultant in the eyes of the supervising teacher created a referential power base for the Clinical Consultants in their interaction with the student teachers. The Clinical Consultants perceived the establishment of a credibility line between themselves and the supervising teachers as critical to their influence with the student teachers. If the supervising teacher felt that the Clinical Consultant had pertinent suggestions, they would reinforce those suggestions with the student teachers. Conversely,

if the Clinical Consultant did not establish that credibility, the supervising teacher, being the only professional in daily contact with the student teacher, could easily undermine the Clinical Consultants' recommendations. Given that the Clinical Consultants represented the interests of the university in the public school, this meant that the university's influence in the school setting could either be enhanced or inhibited.

The question of how the Clinical Consultants might establish credibility beyond the fact of having teaching experience, was in part answered, whether consciously or unconsciously, by the gradually increased usage of three way conferences. Three way conferences allowed the Clinical Consultants, first of all, to establish direct communication with the supervising teachers, letting them see the kind of information the Clinical Consultant was, in fact, imparting to the student teacher. Second, the three way conference allowed the student teacher to see the relationship existing between the supervising teacher and the Clinical Consultant and the supervising teacher's responses to the Clinical Consultant. Further, the three way conference allowed the Clinical Consultant to get a sense of the kind of communication occurring between the supervising teacher and the student teacher as well as the kind of feedback the student teacher was getting from the supervising teacher. The Clinical Consultants perceived a large part of their liaison function to include facilitating communication in the student teacher-

supervising teacher relationship.

Another aspect of the Clinical Consultant job content which departed from traditional college supervisor responsibilities was the research function. The general impression one gets from the data is that this part of the Clinical Consultant position did not fare well either in the clarity of its conception by the administrators, or in its implementation by the Clinical Consultants. The lack of clarity on the part of the administrators seems a plausible explanation for the resultant confusion and disappointment on the part of the Clinical Consultants.

No formalized procedure was provided for doing research projects. The Clinical Consultants wanted greater structure in terms of time allotment and expectations of the TEL Administrator concerning Clinical Consultant research endeavors. The administrators indicated that research was a part of the job but they didn't specify exactly what it should entail nor did they enforce the accomplishment of this responsibility. The people they hired to perform the Clinical Consultant responsibilities were doctoral students who were as much in need of research as of clinical experiences during their graduate training. One might assume, given the literature on **role conflict**, that some form of conflict would be experienced by the Clinical Consultants, given that they originally came to the job assuming research would be a part of their responsibilities.

In fact, however, feelings of disappointment rather than conflict emerged from the data. One possible explanation for this might be that because the Clinical Consultants were also full time graduate students they did not have to identify totally with their job.

The final organizational element to be discussed here is the communication system within which the Clinical Consultant role was embedded.

One of the purposes of communication within an institutional setting concerns the receiving and sending of information related to job performance. In the case of the Clinical Consultant position, two communication lines appeared particularly important. One was between the team professors and the Clinical Consultants and the other was between the Administrator and the Clinical Consultants. Communication between the professors and their Clinical Consultants was important in terms of creating a link between theory and practice. For this link to be strong the theoretical information and team philosophy needed to be clear and consistent.

Results from the data collection show that there was a weakness in this communication line. There was no indication of any kind of supervision or feedback being conducted by the professors with their Clinical Consultants to establish whether, in fact, the theoretical perspectives as taught by the team professors were being stressed with the student teachers once

they started their field assignments. Further, the Clinical Consultants were not clear about what the theoretical perspectives taken by their respective teams were.

Another important communication link was between the TEL Administrator and the Clinical Consultants. His concern was not with the theoretical perspective to be offered by the Clinical Consultants, but rather with the practice of how to supervise the student teachers. Training sessions focused largely on how to do lesson observations and then conduct feedback and analysis sessions with either the student teacher alone, or with both the student teacher and the supervising teacher together.

A gap which appeared from the analysis of the data was that no formal structure was set up to continue the information flow between the Administrator and the Clinical Consultants past the training sessions. Therefore, there was no means by which the Administrator could provide and receive feedback from the Clinical Consultants regarding their job performance other than informally.

Given these conditions, it would appear highly probably that the Clinical Consultants would tend to supervise the student teachers using a theoretical perspective and supervisory behavior with which they felt most familiar. At least two Clinical Consultants indicated that, in fact, they relied on information and experience obtained during their own student teaching experiences to help guide their performance. In essence, this problem in the Clinical Consultant program replicates the problem often

discussed in the teacher training literature, namely, that teachers tend to teach the way they were taught.

Limitations of the Study

This research focused on the study of one teacher training institution as a case in point. Therefore, no claim is made that its findings would necessarily generalize to other institutions. However, given the usefulness of role theory concepts as tools for analysis in this research, there is the high expectation that the application of the organizational perspective to aid the analysis of the college supervisor position in other teacher training institutions would prove equally fruitful.

The following limitations of the study need to be noted, however. First, both the journals and the interviews with the Clinical Consultants were done at only one point in time during the year. Thus, they can only be said to reflect the feelings and behaviors of the Clinical Consultants at that time. In fact, their feelings and behaviors may have changed considerably over the course of the year which would not be reflected in the data gathered. Although that information would surely have added insight, it was not critical to one of the main purposes of this study, namely to demonstrate the usefulness of approaching the study of the college supervisor position from an organizational perspective.

Second, the responsibilities and activities of the Clinical

Consultants are based on self reports of the job holders themselves. In order to verify what was occurring in the field, this researcher would have ideally followed each Clinical Consultant on his/her school visitations to make first hand observations. However, because the researcher was herself involved in the program, this was not possible.

Third, the participant-observer status of the researcher brings to bear all the attendant strengths and weaknesses associated with that position which have been noted in the qualitative research literature. Although biases may indeed be present in the analysis, the researcher has reason to believe that they did not interfere significantly. The following supports this contention. When the research was begun, one of the main hypotheses under consideration was that as a result of the particular combination of roles within the consultant position, role conflict could be expected to occur and be one of the major problem areas. In fact, this hypotheses was not borne out in the data, with the analysis ultimately addressing other factors which had not initially been considered.

Implications

This study was intended as an exploratory research effort. As such, its implications and recommendations are offered tentatively. Only a few will be mentioned here.

First, this study did strongly suggest the usefulness of adopting an organizational perspective in the study of the

college supervisor position in pre-service teacher education for explanatory purposes. Other teacher training institutions are encouraged to employ a similar approach to the analysis of their own college supervisor positions to aid in the fine tuning of their own supervisory programs.

Second, the results of this study indicate that the Clinical Consultant program presents some interesting and potentially useful alternatives to the traditional college supervisor position, challenging some long held assumptions about the nature of that position.

Third, training and feedback for the college supervisor appears to be a critical element which can affect the nature of the supervisor-student teacher interaction.

Finally, the notion of the three way conference appears to be a potentially powerful strategy in the supervision process.

The initial results indicate strong support for such a procedure based on social psychological principles. Further research is needed to study more closely the nature of the three way interaction, its benefits and drawbacks and the kind of training a supervisor would need to facilitate such an interaction.

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